

JACK MILLER CENTER

American Political Thought

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American Political Thought, Ursinus

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Politics 330

MW 1:30-2:45

Fall 2008

Instructor, Jonathan Marks, X2597, jmarks@ursinus.edu

Office Hours: 9:15-10:15, TWThF, Bomberger 209

In this course, we will read and discuss some of the thinkers, statesmen, and theologians, who have long been considered the best and most influential in the American political tradition. In so doing, we will consider the American contribution to our reflection on enduring political questions, such as: what is justice? What is statesmanship? What is the best political order and to what is it devoted? We will begin by investigating the principles that animated the revolution and founding as well as some of the tensions between and debates concerning those principles. Then we will consider whether and to what extent those principles had to be modified to meet the slavery crisis. Finally, we will take up the challenges posed to American political thinkers by the old evil of race prejudice and by new evils associated with technological and economic change.

Course Format and Requirements

This course will have a lecture/discussion format. Through quizzes, you will be required to show that you have done the readings carefully and thought about them. Often, I will hand out questions to guide you as you think about the readings. You must come to class prepared to answer these questions.

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

15% 5 page paper #1

20% 5 page paper #2

30% 8 page final paper

15% Quizzes

20% Participation

On-time attendance is expected. Four or more absences may have a negative impact on your grade. Six or more absences may result in a 0.0 for the class. I am willing to consider, in applying this policy, whether a genuine emergency has kept you out of class, if you let me know as soon as possible, preferably before missing class, and if you present documentation. There are, however, no excused absences. If you do miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and for getting any handouts or assignments you may have missed.

Frequent lateness will have a negative impact on your grade. When I have quizzes, I usually have them at the beginning of class, so it is a good idea always to arrive on time.

Texts

All texts are available at the bookstore, except for the course packet, which you must purchase from Cathy Bogusky. You will find her on the second floor of Bomberger in the afternoon and on the third floor of Bomberger in the morning. Since our first readings are from the course packet, you will need to get it right away. Here are the other texts:

John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, Prometheus Books

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, Dover Thrift Edition

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Dover Thrift Edition

You are expected to obtain a copy of the edition we are using for class.

Attendance

On-time attendance is expected. Four or more absences may have a negative impact on your grade. Six or more absences may result in a 0.0 for the class. I am willing to consider, in applying this policy, whether a genuine emergency has kept you out of class, if you let me know as soon as possible, preferably before missing class, and if you present documentation. There are, however, no excused absences. If you do miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and for getting any handouts or assignments you may have missed.

Frequent lateness will have a negative impact on your grade.

Participation

I will grade participation on *roughly* the following scale.

A You raise the level of discussion by asking insightful questions or making insightful observations, especially those that draw attention to the texts and the comments of other participants. You show that you have thought carefully about any discussion questions that you have been asked to think about. You volunteer to participate frequently.

B You ask questions and make observations that move the discussion forward, especially questions and observations that show your familiarity and engagement with the texts and with the comments of other participants. If called upon, you consistently show that you have thought about any discussion questions that you have been asked to think about. You volunteer to participate regularly.

C You show up. If called on, you are able to demonstrate a basic understanding of

what the readings say, demonstrate that you have made an observation about the text, or demonstrate that you have thought enough about the text to have an informed question to ask. You volunteer to participate sometimes.

D and below You lower the level of discussion by coming to class with nothing to contribute, or by failing to treat the discussion and participants in it with respect. When called upon, you demonstrate that you have not thought about the discussion questions you have been asked to think about, or that you have made no observations about the text, or that you have not thought enough about the texts to ask an informed question. You often come without the books, or do not take notes, or sleep during class. You volunteer to participate rarely.

Papers

You will have to write a total of three papers for this course. The 8 page paper will be due during finals week. Everyone must do the first five page paper assignment; for the second five page paper, you will choose one of four assignments I will give throughout the course of the semester. I strongly urge you to take this opportunity to write on something you think will genuinely interest you and to write your second paper when your other responsibilities are least heavy,

Papers must be word processed on a computer. There should be about 300 words on a page. **You must back up your paper and keep a disk and hard copy for your own records** and in case there is any confusion as to whether you handed in the paper or not. Unless I give you special permission, you must hand in a hard copy of your paper in class on the day it is due. As a rule, electronic submissions will not be accepted.

Late papers will be penalized, one half grade (A to A-) for each day you fail to turn it in. Papers are always due *at the beginning* of class. If you hand it in more than ten minutes after the beginning of class, you will be penalized one half grade.

Academic Honesty

The college's policy on academic honesty is stated on p. 13 of the Student Handbook, available online at <http://www.ursinus.edu/resources/CurrentStudentHandbook.pdf>

The default penalty for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty is failure in the course. I also report academic dishonesty to the Dean's Office. This policy applies to all cases of academic dishonesty, from lifting a paper from a friend to lifting a sentence from Wikipedia, and from directly copying to paraphrasing without naming your source. If you have any doubt about what plagiarism is please consult me or the handbook. My papers do not require you to consult sources outside of the class readings. But if you do consult such sources, you need to cite them.

E-Mail

Occasionally, I may need to use e-mail to make announcements to the class or to communicate with you on an individual basis. You are responsible for checking your e-mail once per day to make sure you do not miss important announcements. You are also welcome to use e-mail to get in touch with me, though I urge you strongly to attend office hours or make an appointment when you have anything of substance to discuss—e.g. a paper you are working on.

Tentative Reading Schedule

August 28 No reading

Colonists, Revolutionaries, Founders

1. God's Country? On the Moral Foundations of American Politics

August 25 Mayflower Compact, Declaration, Letters to R.E. Lee and Weightman

August 27 Winthrop, "Christian Charity," Cotton, "Christian Calling"; Wise,
"Democracy is Founded in Scripture."

September 1 Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," Jefferson "Query XVII"

September 3 Michael McConnell, "Believers as Equal Citizens

Amy Gutmann, "Religious Freedom and Civic Responsibility." **First**

Paper Assignment Distributed.

2. Benjamin Franklin: The First American

September 8 Franklin, *Autobiography*

September 10 Franklin, *Autobiography*. **First Paper Assignment Due.**

September 15 Franklin, *Autobiography*. **First Option for Paper 2 Distributed**

3. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

September 17 Federalist 1, 2, Brutus 1.

September 22 Federalist 10, 48, 51. **First Option for Paper 2 Due.**

September 24 Federalist 23, 69, 70, 72

September 29 Fatovic, "Constitutional and Presidential Prerogative."

October 1 Bill of Rights, Federalist #84, Jefferson to Madison, Dec. 20, 1787, Madison to Jefferson, Oct. 17, 1788, Jefferson to Madison, March 15, 1789, CP, 57-72.

October 6 Jefferson's Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank, 1791

Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XIV, 1785

Hamilton's Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank, 1791

Hamilton, Report on Manufactures, Excerpt, 1791.

The Slavery Crisis

October 8 Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision"

October 13 Fall Holiday

October 15 First Lincoln-Douglas Debate. October 20 Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown"; Lincoln, "Young Man's Lyceum. **Second Option for Paper 2 distributed.**

October 22 Kleinerman, "Lincoln's Example"

October 27 Frederick Douglass, "Fourth of July Oration," "What are the Colored

People Doing for Themselves?" "An Address to the Colored People of the

United States," "Prejudice Not Natural." **Second Option for Paper 2 Due.**

October 29 Douglass, "The Present and Future of the Colored Race in America,

"What the Black Man Wants, "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln"

November 3 Twain, *Huck Finn*

November 5 Twain, *Huck Finn*

November 10 Twain, *Huck Finn*. **Third Option for Paper 2 distributed.**

Challenges Old and New

The Du Bois-Washington Debate

November 12 Booker T. Washington, “Atlanta Exposition Address,” “Democracy and Education,” “On Making Our Race Life Count in the Nation, and W.E.B. Du Bois, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others.”

November 17 Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Forethought, “Of Our Spiritual Striving, “Of the Training of Black Men,” “The Sorrow Songs,” Obama,

“A More Perfect Union.” **Third Option for Paper 2 Due.**

Progressivism

November 19 Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, 5-49

November 24 Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, 51-83. **Fourth Option for Paper 2**

Distributed.

November 26 Thanksgiving Recess

December 1 Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, selections. **Fourth Option for Paper 2 Due.**

December 3 Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, selections. **Final Paper**

Topic Distributed. The paper is due on December 10.